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ABSTRACT

There is considerable literature to indicate that mentoring relationships support the healthy development of children and youth by reducing risky behaviors, and the number of mentoring programs has increased dramatically in recent years. This California Research Bureau report examines the research literature evaluating the effectiveness of mentoring programs during the past 5 years. The report notes that the traditional one-to-one, community-based friendship program that emphasizes building youth-adult relationships and developing personal skills is the most common mentoring model. However, current programs encompass a range of alternative designs. These include programs that provide one mentor for a group of children, online mentoring programs, and programs offered at specific sites such as schools. School-based programs are the most common, and rapidly expanding, type of site-based mentoring. The report includes descriptions of several mentoring models and evaluation findings from a variety of these programs. (Contains 83 references.) (GCP)

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Effectiveness of Mentor Programs

Review of the Literature from 1995 to 2000

By Lisa Foster, M.S.W., M.P.A.

Prepared at the Request of Senator Dede Alpert, Chair, Senate Select Committee On Family, Child and Youth Development

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"As we reflect on the role of caring in young people's lives, what becomes clear is that youths need to grow up in a world infused with and organized by care... To become the caring citizens we need them to be, young people need to have made real the vision of the interdependent lives organized around public, as well as private, caregiving responsibilities... They must see care made the serious work of public life, rather than a private lifestyle choice. They must grow up in a community where they can both expect the constancy and trust of caring and know that such responsibility will be expected of them."

Diana Mendley Rauner, *They Still Pick Me up When I Fall*

"You have brains in your head. You have feet in your shoes. You can steer yourself any direction you choose."

Dr. Seuss, *Oh, the Places You'll Go!*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Mentoring creates a relationship between caring adults and youth. A mentor provides support and guidance for a child or youth in his or her personal, academic, and other areas of life. As a public policy tool, mentoring is a positive youth intervention that reduces risky and negative behaviors. In 1997, the California Research Bureau (CRB) reviewed the research evaluation literature on mentoring and found that mentoring programs were moderately successful in improving academic performance and contributing to the well-being of children and youth.

Since that time, mentoring has grown in popularity and is widely accepted as a valuable support for at-risk children and youth. An estimated 2,300 mentoring programs are serving children and youth throughout the State. Seventy-two percent of more than 1,000 California adults surveyed in 1997 said that they would be willing to pay more in taxes for mentoring programs. Close to 60% of more than 1,600 adults responding to a 2000 survey felt that mentoring programs are a very effective investment in reducing youth violence and other youth problems and would like to see the number of programs increased.*

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* The *Children and Youth Survey* (1997) and the *Californians' Beliefs About Health Survey* (2000) were conducted by telephone by the Field Institute for the California Center of Health Improvement Initiative.

This CRB report examines the research literature evaluating the effectiveness of mentoring programs during the past five years. The traditional one-to-one, community-based friendship program that emphasizes building youth-adult relationships and developing personal skills is the most common mentoring model. However, current programs encompass a range of alternative designs. These include programs that provide one mentor for a group of children, electronic on-line mentoring programs, and programs offered at specific sites such as schools. School-based programs are the most common, and rapidly expanding, type of site-based mentoring. Other program designs utilize peer mentors or target specific groups of children and youth, such as foster youth and teen mothers.

There are common themes in the mentoring evaluation literature. The first theme is that mentoring programs have developed a broader focus. Traditionally, mentoring programs were designed as interventions to address specific risk areas or problem behaviors such as school dropout rates, youth violence, adolescent pregnancy, and drug and alcohol use. Currently, mentoring is generally viewed as one component of a more comprehensive youth development strategy. Youth development strategies help youth to gain the competencies they need to meet the challenges of adolescence and become successful adults. In contrast to a narrow focus on risky behaviors, the youth development approach considers the developmental needs of all children and youth, and builds upon their existing assets. These needs include safe places and activities, health and mental health, marketable skills, and opportunities for service and civic participation. Relationships with caring adults are also essential. Mentoring provides a formal, *structured* caring relationship.

A recent study concluded that a wide range of youth development approaches, including mentoring, result in improved behavior changes (in interpersonal skills and relationships, self-control and academic achievement) and in reduced problem behaviors (such as drug use, aggressive behavior, and truancy). There are limitations in these interventions, however. One mentoring relationship is not likely to alleviate all of the negative influences that may confront a child or youth, such as poverty, stressed families, poor schools, high-crime neighborhoods, or other serious problems. Nor is it likely that a single intervention can change a child's or youth's life, although occasionally that can happen. Most children and youth will need a succession of positive informal and formal experiences and interventions in order to become successful adults.

The second major theme in the literature is the impact of infrastructure on mentoring effectiveness. Not all mentoring relationships or programs are beneficial. Program quality is critical. Quality mentoring programs with strong infrastructure do produce benefits for children and youth. Essential infrastructure elements include mentor screening, careful matching, mentor/mentee orientation and training, and ongoing support and supervision.

A third major theme in the literature is the need for additional and better evaluations of mentoring programs. A 1995 impact evaluation of the Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) program continues to be the landmark study of mentoring. This evaluation studied more than 1000 children, ages 10–16, over an 18-month period. Compared to the children in

the control group, BBBS children with mentors were less likely to begin using drugs and alcohol; less likely to hit someone; and less likely to skip school. BBBS children felt more competent about doing schoolwork, skipped one-third fewer classes, and showed modest gains in their grade point averages.

Since the BBBS study, a number of studies have used social science-based methodologies to evaluate mentoring effectiveness and determine outcomes. However, these studies generally have looked at much smaller programs and may not be generalized to larger populations. As for most social service programs, the majority of mentor program evaluations continue to be based on anecdotal information and participant reports and observations. They have other limitations. Few follow-up studies track long-term outcomes to determine if positive changes last over time. Different outcome measures are used to evaluate different programs, which makes it difficult to evaluate, interpret, and compare programs. In addition, evaluation descriptions are often not comprehensive enough to allow the reader to independently assess the quality of the evaluation and data.

Lack of funding is one barrier to conducting well-designed evaluations. Another is that many programs do not consider evaluation to be a priority, placing all of their resources in running the program. Without an evaluation mechanism, programs are unable to learn from their strengths and weaknesses and cannot demonstrate whether they have made a difference.

A cost-effective state strategy to address the need for continued evaluation would be to adequately fund targeted evaluations that meet scientific standards. The findings would inform current practices and could lead to more effective program designs.

The State might benefit from a general evaluation framework that encompasses the full range of mentoring evaluation activities across state agencies and does the following:

- Identifies evaluation needs and gaps. Coordinates with existing state and national evaluation efforts.
- Invests funds in well-designed evaluation efforts in addition to operating funds. Includes long-term follow-up studies to track outcomes over time. Shares funds and resources across agencies.
- Identifies and implements outcome evaluations of alternative mentoring program models to determine the impact of different program designs on effectiveness, and identify the essential elements of an effective program.
- Creates common indicators and data definitions, consistent with the developmental needs of children and youth, for all programs.
- Develops realistic and measurable participant and program outcomes that can be used to improve program practices.

- Develops a "learning" strategy to share evaluation findings.

Developing and implementing a framework for a comprehensive research agenda for mentoring is consistent with ongoing state collaborative efforts around mentoring. The California Mentor Initiative, or a similar entity, could be assigned lead responsibility and provided the authority to build upon existing collaborative efforts to develop an effective evaluation framework, and oversee its implementation.

Introduction

In 1997, the California Research Bureau (CRB) published *Academic Tutoring and Mentoring: A Literature Review*. That report summarized the existing research and literature that evaluated academic tutoring and mentoring programs.[1] Given the increased exposure, popularity, and expectations of mentor programs since that time, this CRB report provides an update on mentoring effectiveness. To assist the reader interested in exploring this subject further, a list of references and website resources is also provided.

There is considerable literature to indicate that mentoring relationships support the healthy development of children and youth by reducing risky behaviors. The number of mentoring programs has increased dramatically in recent years. For example, mentoring is now funded as a juvenile justice strategy. It has been identified at the national level as one of four promising strategies to reduce youth violence.[2]

Mentoring is seen as a life-changing strategy for assisting California's at-risk youth to become productive, contributing members of society. Since 1995, the State of California has invested approximately $76 million in local mentoring efforts.[3] The State also supports mentoring by state employees. Labor contracts for several units provide mentoring leave for state employees who use personal time during the workday to mentor a child or youth.* In June 1995, Executive Order W-125-95 created the California Mentor Initiative (CMI).† The CMI, located in the Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs, works in partnership with diverse public and private organizations to increase public awareness and opportunities for volunteer-based mentoring.

The CMI reports that over 340,000 mentor matches have provided support to California children and youth since 1995. An estimated 2,300 mentoring programs operate in the State. Over 325 mentoring programs have certified that they meet the quality standards adopted by the CMI to provide protection for mentees and foster long-term operational stability. The CMI Quality Assurance (QA) Standards require a long-range plan, recruitment, orientation and training plans for mentors and mentees, eligibility screening and matching strategies, a monitoring process, a support, recognition and retention component, closure steps, and an evaluation process. All mentoring programs that receive state general funds must meet the QA standards.[4]

A number of state departments administer and fund statewide and local mentoring programs that serve children and youth. With the goal of "one million quality mentor matches by 2005," the CMI and state agencies have been participating in a collaborative

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* Eligible employees in Units 1, 2, 3, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 16, 19, and 21 may receive up to 40 hours of "mentoring leave" per calendar year.

† Executive Order W-132-96, issued April 1996, rescinded Executive Order W-125-95. The CMI functions continue to be sustained.

effort to promote and support mentoring as an important youth development strategy.* Brought together under the leadership of Senator Dede Alpert in August 1999, the State Agency Collaborative on Mentoring and Youth Development has been working on several strategies. These strategies include developing standardized data collection and reporting systems, implementing statewide recruitment efforts, disseminating information and promoting public awareness, and maximizing funding for state-level mentoring activities and local programs.

*Agencies involved in the State Agency Collaborative include: Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs, Health and Human Services Agency, Department of Health Services, California Youth Authority, Office of the Secretary for Education, Office of Criminal Justice Planning, Office of the Attorney General, California Conservation Corps, Commission on Improving Life Through Service, Department of Community Services and Development, Department of Education, and the California State Library.

Mentoring as a Youth Development Strategy

Adolescence is a challenging time, filled with difficult choices for youth. However, many adolescents have limited access to safe and healthy alternatives and supports (including recreation and after-school activities) that would help them avoid such risky behaviors as sexual activity and drug use. This is especially true for those youth who live in environments characterized by poverty, crime, and violence.[5]

Traditionally, mentoring programs have been used as an intervention to address a specific youth problem such as school drop-out rates, youth violence, adolescent pregnancy, and drug and alcohol use. This targeted intervention strategy focuses on solving problems, providing adult guidance to both influence those adolescents engaged in the risky behavior and prevent the problem behavior.

The current literature on mentoring generally reflects a broader view of mentoring. Mentoring is seen as one component of the "positive youth development" approach. "Positive youth development" is oriented around the basic needs and stages of a youth's development. It assumes that addressing basic developmental needs, rather than "fixing" or removing specific problems, most effectively achieves enduring, positive results. Youth development strategies help youth gain the assets (competencies) they need to master the challenges of adolescence and become healthy, responsible and caring adults. They encompass a series of activities and experiences that are designed to help youth to become socially, morally, emotionally, physically, and cognitively competent.[6]

The primary foundation of youth development comes from a convergence of prevention and developmental theories. Prevention research has found that children and youths' environments are shaped by the presence or absence of many different factors. Risk factors and protective factors (assets) are found across families, peer, school, and community environments, as well as within the individual. Exposure to increasing numbers of risk factors increases the likelihood of problem behaviors. However, exposure to increasing numbers of protective factors can prevent problem behaviors, in spite of risk factors. In addition, the same risk and protective factors have been found to impact a variety of problem behaviors. Prevention research has also confirmed a developmental impact by finding that different risk and protective factors have greater impacts at different stages of a child or youth's development.[7]

The youth development approach aims to build strengths. It builds upon the existing assets of children and youth. The underlying premise is that the more assets youth have, the less likely they are to engage in risky, problem behaviors. In addition, children and youth with more assets are more likely to engage in positive behaviors that are valued by society, like being successful at school and volunteering in the community.*[8]

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* This finding is based on a Search Institute study that measured the impact of youth development programs by reviewing the literature and surveying nearly 250,000 youth in 430 communities nationwide.

Youth development approaches address the broader developmental needs of all children and youth. Developmental needs and assets include a sense of safety, challenging and interesting activities, a feeling of belonging, leadership, participation in decision-making; and opportunities for community service. Health and mental health and marketable skills are also considered to be needs and assets. Children and youth who have these supports and opportunities are more likely to have a healthy, productive adolescence and adulthood.[9]

A sustained and supportive relationship with a caring adult is a key developmental experience in successful adolescent development. Mentoring, informal or formal, provides a structured caring relationship between adults and youth. In fact, most mentoring relationships are informal connections with family members or friends. However, due to societal changes such as increased family mobility, and isolation among families and within communities, many children and youth have fewer opportunities to develop informal caring relationships with adults. This creates the rationale and need for providing formal mentoring programs.[10]

The developmental perspective identifies important tasks, challenges, and milestones, and the competencies needed to meet them. One theme is that positive growth and development are fostered when adolescents have developed a belief in their own abilities, a feeling of connectedness to others and society, a belief in their control over their fate in life, and a stable identity. Another theme is that development occurs through reciprocal and dynamic interactions between the individual and his or her environment, including society, community, family, and peers.[11]

A recent study of youth development interventions concluded that a wide range of youth development approaches, including mentoring, result in positive behavior changes such as improved interpersonal skills and relationships, and increased self-control and academic achievement. These approaches also reduce problem behaviors such as drug use, aggressive behavior, and truancy.*[12] For example, the overwhelming majority of 500 police chiefs from small, medium, and large U.S. cities agreed that crime could be sharply reduced if government invested more in programs, including mentoring, that help children and youth get a good start. The police chiefs ranked increased investment in programs that help children and youth as being the most effective crime prevention strategy in the long term, even in comparison to several crime-fighting approaches, including hiring more police officers.[13]

Other studies have highlighted some limitations to the formal mentoring approach. For example, some studies have found that volunteer relationships may not be as influential or enduring as those that form naturally. In addition, youth who are most in need of mentors may be least likely to trust volunteer mentors.[14] One mentoring relationship may not be able to alleviate all of the negative influences confronting a child or youth. It is

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* These interventions were designated as "effective" based on evidence that they met the study's research design criteria: control or strong comparison groups and measured behavioral outcomes.

also unlikely that any single intervention can change a child's or youth's life. Most children and youth will need a succession of positive experiences and interventions, both informal and formal. Mentoring is one important positive intervention.[15]

Program Design and Effectiveness

As the number of mentoring programs continues to grow, quality has become a major issue. Not all mentoring relationships or programs result in benefits to the mentees. Research shows that mentoring programs with strong infrastructure can produce positive impacts.[16] A primary reason is that program infrastructure directly affects the mentor/mentee relationship.

Solid mentor/mentee relationships are essential for improving mentee's attitudes, behaviors, and performance. Mentoring programs provide the setting for developing and maintaining solid relationships between mentors and mentees. The literature identifies specific elements that are critical for an effective mentoring program. Three essential program elements are:[17]

- *Screening.* The screening process identifies those adults who are likely to be effective as mentors. Effective mentor characteristics include the ability to build trust, maintain a steady presence in a youth's life, respect the youth's viewpoint, understand the need for "fun," and acquaintance with the mentee's family without becoming too involved. Another important characteristic is the mentor's willingness to consult with the program staff for help and advice.

- *Orientation and Training.* Orientation and training ensure that mentors and mentees share a common understanding of the mentor's role. These activities help mentors develop realistic expectations of what they can accomplish.

- *Support and Supervision.* Ongoing support and supervision helps mentors to build trust and develop positive relationships, and helps both mentors and mentees to negotiate the challenges in their relationship.

The matching process is another important infrastructure element. The failure rate of mentor matches is high in many programs and the best pairing strategy is not known. However, research does indicate that the mentor's behavior is far more important to the relationship's success (length, mentee satisfaction, and positive outcomes) than mentor characteristics such as age, race, and gender. Matches based on mentor/mentee similarities and preferences, such as attitudes and activities, are more likely to result in close and supportive relationships.[18] Little difference has been found between same- and cross-gender matches, and between same-ethnic and cross-ethnic matches.[19]

Evaluating Mentoring Effectiveness

Need for Additional and Better Evaluation

Most mentoring programs are not formally evaluated. They rely heavily on anecdotal information and participant reports to determine program effectiveness. Measuring change in participant outcomes is one of the primary means of demonstrating program effectiveness. One example is a program that uses university students to mentor elementary school children who are at risk of school failure. This program's effectiveness is measured based on teacher reports about positive behavior, attitude, and self-image changes in participating children.[20] The role of mentoring in motivating these changes is not clear.

Several areas of concern apply to mentoring evaluations, as well as to other youth development program evaluations. First, few follow-up studies track long-term outcomes. Long-term studies are necessary to determine if positive effects continue. Second, different outcome measures are used in evaluating different programs. Standardized, consistent measures would allow outcomes to be evaluated, interpreted, and compared in a meaningful way across programs. Third, descriptions of evaluation studies are often not comprehensive enough. Complete descriptions of the program and research design are needed to allow the reader to independently assess the program's accomplishments and compare outcomes across studies.[21]

A recent CRB evaluation of the California Academic Volunteer and Mentor Service Program concluded that several data problems made it difficult to assess the effectiveness of the programs in improving educational outcomes and behavior. In addition to identifying the need to standardize and enforce data collection requirements and consider longer-term analysis, the report recommended that alternative mentoring approaches be evaluated, and that guidelines based on best practices be provided for new programs.[22]

The literature on mentoring effectiveness reflects the need for better research, particularly evaluation of the impact of mentoring as an intervention. Better research designs are needed.[23]

Barriers to Evaluation

Often, the major barrier to conducting evaluations is lack of funding for a well-designed study. Outcome evaluations and studies are expensive to design, implement, and complete. Another barrier is that many programs do not consider an evaluation to be a priority. Program staff report that their work with mentors and mentees and running the program leaves little time and energy to collect data, fill out reports, and participate in the more rigorous forms of program evaluation.[24] This is an understandable but short-sighted viewpoint; a good evaluation will identify a program's accomplishments and offer suggestions for improvements.

The National Institute of Justice has identified three principles for prioritizing funding for evaluations of mentoring programs that target crime prevention. These principles can be applied to a broad range of mentoring programs.

- Not every program requires an evaluation. Spending sufficient funds for strong evaluations in a few sites is far more cost-effective than spending small amounts of money for weak evaluations in thousands of sites.
- Evaluation funds should be conserved for impact evaluations.* Limited funding often forces a choice between many descriptive evaluations or a few well-designed impact (outcome) evaluations that demonstrate whether and how the program affects participants. A well-designed evaluation would likely have a control group, standardized measurement tools, and a long-term focus.
- Impact evaluations should be conducted using at least a minimum level of scientific methodology (such as a controlled experimental design with random assignment).[25]

Scientific, experimental evaluation methods are not feasible or appropriate for evaluating every mentoring program. Alternative approaches can be used to justify a program's impact. One approach is to compare a program with programs that have similar characteristics and have already been evaluated. Another is to establish a theoretical foundation by linking a program to a perspective that is widely understood (such as the youth development approach). This can be a "first step" in documenting impact, and could be followed by outcome research to demonstrate impact. A third alternative is to follow an integrated approach, building on previous research. This would include a theoretical framework, a study linking the framework to specific outcomes, and measurement tools consistent with the framework to assess key program indicators. Although the theoretical approach does not demonstrate impact as directly as a program-specific outcome evaluation, it provides much of the essential information needed to develop and inform programs.[26]

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* Impact evaluations are a form of outcome evaluation. They assess the net effect of a program by comparing program outcomes with an estimate of what would have happened in the absence of the program.

Mentoring Models and Evaluation Findings

The most common structure in mentoring programs is an adult or older youth mentoring one child/youth. However, mentoring approaches have expanded beyond the traditional one-to-one, community-based friendship models* such as Big Brother Big Sisters (BBBS) programs. Current approaches encompass a range of alternative program designs that address specific issues and populations. These include programs offered at specific sites such as schools and hospitals, and programs that provide one mentor for a group of children. New mentoring models include online or telementoring (in which mentors use e-mail or other electronic communication). Mentor programs also target specific groups of children and youth, such as foster youth and teen mothers.

In 1997, a Public/Private Ventures (P/PV) study developed a classification system for mentoring programs.† It is based on four criteria: 1) group or one-to-one models, 2) site-based or community-based, 3) type of mentor commitment, and 4) program infrastructure. The P/PV classification study found that mentoring programs are increasingly diverse in design. In addition:

- The number of mentoring programs has increased substantially in recent years. Nearly 40 percent of the surveyed programs had been in operation for less than five years. Most of the new programs are relatively small and serve less than 50 mentees.
- Mentoring programs have a variety of goals, such as personal development and academic performance, and expect youth and mentors to engage in a variety of activities, including social, recreational, and academic activities.
- Programs are combining mentoring with other program components, such as parent involvement and tutoring, to respond to the needs of children and youth in a more comprehensive way.
- The level of infrastructure -- mentor screening, orientation and training, and on-going support -- varies across programs. However, most are meeting the BBBS national quality standards for program and process (such as staffing levels and strategic and financial planning).

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* Friendship models of mentoring emphasize building relationships and personal development skills.

† The P/PV study surveyed mentoring programs to develop a database of programs. Over 2,000 programs were contacted through the survey process; 722 completed telephone interviews or self-administered questionnaires describing their program practices, standards and characteristics. The study had the following limitations: it is not representative of all mentoring programs because only programs for school-age children (ages 5-18) were surveyed; programs self-selected into the study; and the sample was developed through known contacts. As a result, small programs with limited budgets were more likely to be excluded from the sample.

- Newer programs tend to offer shorter-term mentoring relationships than the traditional BBBS model that generally requires a minimum commitment of 12 months.[27]

The P/PV classification study found that mentor programs are often designed to achieve multiple goals. Most (nearly three-fourths of the more than 700 programs surveyed) intend for mentors to have a positive effect on a mentee's personal development; nearly two-thirds expect mentors to influence student academic behavior or performance. In addition, about 70 percent of the surveyed programs expect mentors and mentees to spend some time together in social and recreational activities, and 80 percent expect them to include academic activities as part of the mentoring relationship. The programmatic goals for mentoring relationships appear to be changing over time. Programs over ten years old are more likely to identify personal development or relationship formation as a goal, while newer programs (less than two years old) are more likely to have academic or career-related goals.[28]

One to One Mentoring

The majority of mentoring programs match one mentor with one mentee. Roughly 80 percent of mentoring programs surveyed in the P/PV classification study are based on the one-to-one design.

- The 1995 P/PV impact evaluation of the BBBS program studied more than 1000 children, ages 10–16, over an 18-month period. The participants were randomly assigned to receive mentoring or to be in the "control" group. The BBBS study is commonly described as the landmark "scientific" study of mentoring.* The researchers concluded that "there is clear and convincing evidence that caring relationships between non-relative adults and youth can be created and supported by programs, and can yield a wide range of tangible benefits."[29] Compared to the children in the control group, BBBS children with mentors were:
  - 46 percent less likely to begin using illegal drugs;
  - 27 percent less likely to begin using alcohol;
  - 53 percent less likely to skip school;
  - 33 percent less likely to hit someone; and

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* The BBBS study compared 1,138 youth, 93% ages 10-14, who applied to BBBS and were randomly assigned to either a "treatment" or "control" group. Youth assigned to the treatment group were matched with a mentor, while control youth were placed on a waiting list for the 18 months of the research period (10/91-2/93). Youth in both groups were interviewed prior to assignment and 18 months later. The impact of mentoring was determined by comparing outcomes of each group.

- BBBS children felt more competent about doing schoolwork, skipped one-third fewer classes, and showed modest gains in their grade point averages.

The primary limitation of the BBBS study is that a fairly narrow age range of youth were involved (over 90 percent were ages 10-14). The results cannot be generalized to younger children or older youth.

- An evaluation of Sponsor-a-Scholar (SAS), a Philadelphia program that encourages at-risk high school students to stay in school and attend college, found positive effects for its participants. Students received the help and support of an adult mentor, academic assistance, college counseling, and financial aid for five years, from ninth grade through the first year of college. Over 400 SAS participants in four graduating classes were compared with a matched group. The SAS participants significantly improved their grade point averages, increased their attendance in college preparation activities, and had significantly higher college attendance rates. The evaluation found that students who had fewer resources (those attending poor schools, little family financial support, low grade point averages, and low motivation) benefited the most from the program. In addition, specific mentor behavior, such as frequent communication and closer personal relationships with the students' families, increased the quality of the mentor relationship and student outcomes.*[30]

Conversely, evaluations of two local BBBS programs did not find evidence that mentoring had a beneficial impact on mentees.

- The Brothers Project was a four-year mentoring program in Lexington, Kentucky, that targeted African-American adolescents ages 14-16. Mentors were matched with an equal number of adolescents with the goal of helping them do well in school, avoid drug use and juvenile delinquency, and become productive, self-sustaining adults. The evaluation measured changes over time for the 36 adolescents, who were randomly assigned to the mentored and control groups. The evaluation did not detect any statistically significant differences between the two groups.†[31]

- A Midwestern BBBS program targeted boys ages 8-14 from single-parent families. The purpose of this two-year study was to evaluate whether the 22 boys with mentors differed from the 22 boys in the control group in self-concept, academic performance, mother/child relations, and frequency of behavioral problems. The study measured

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* The SAS study collected longitudinal data from a sample of 434 students from four consecutive graduating classes and a matched comparison group of non-SAS students. Utilizing formal regression analysis, data sources included quantitative information (from surveys, transcripts, school information, program records) and qualitative information (from interviews, program coordinator notes) collected from both groups at four points in the study.

† The four-year Brothers Project study used an experimental design with random assignment to a control group and a group matched with mentors. Data was periodically collected on school performance and behavior, and from assessment instruments using self-report scales.

changes over time using self-reports from mentees/mothers and grade point averages. The boys reported modest improvement in the quality of the parent/child relationship, though the linkage to the mentoring relationship was unclear. No differences between the two groups were found in the remaining areas.*[32]

Group Mentoring

According to the P/PV classification study, over one-fifth of the mentor programs use a group mentoring model. Group mentoring programs generally assign one mentor to work with several mentees. The median ratio is one to four. Some group programs match multiple youth with one mentor, but the mentor meets with each youth individually. A common example of this program is found in schools in which retired persons meet one-to-one with each of several children daily. Another group program design is matching multiple mentors with groups of youth.

Programs established in the last ten years are more likely to use a group mentoring approach. It compensates for a shortage of volunteer mentors and attracts volunteers who may not be comfortable with a one-to-one relationship.

- A large New York group foster care agency recruits adults who want "to give something back" to the community but are not able or willing to participate in mentoring programs that require significant time commitments. In the Personal and Racial/Ethnic Identity Development and Enhancement (PRIDE) Program, adult role models join groups of foster youth at a monthly session on a one-time basis. This interactive group approach is described as a "hybrid" between one-to-one mentoring and career day programs. Based on facilitator observation and feedback from foster youth, adult role models and agency child-care staff, the program promotes positive self-image and motivates foster youth to use a variety of health and educational/vocational resources.[33]

In the majority of group programs, mentoring is one component of a larger comprehensive program.[34]

- Project Support was a group mentoring program that focused on alcohol, drug, and dropout prevention for at-risk middle-school children in four low-income Nassau County, New York, public school districts. This federally funded five-year program included several components (such as tutoring, parent participation and curriculum development) to address a variety of risk factors for participating children. Two program components were a school-based mentoring program in which teachers

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* The two-year study used an experimental design with random assignment to a control group and to a group with assigned mentors. The study results were reported for the remaining 22 boys in the intervention group, and the 22 boys in the comparison group who most closely matched the intervention group's demographics. (While 120 boys in both groups began the study, about 60% dropped out of the program during this period because of relocation or loss of contact with the organization.) Pre- and post-tests were administered, the post-test was given between 12-18 months.

mentored groups of children, and an outdoor education experience that supported the mentoring component.

A description of Project Support asserts that the group mentoring and outdoor education components promoted ongoing, close relationships that were very effective in engaging children and families in the educational process and in reducing the effects of risk factors. However, the program description does not provide enough information for readers to make an independent judgement of the program's impact. While the authors refer to a research-based "strong evaluation component," they do not describe the methodology. In addition, they do not address the effectiveness of the other Project Support components such as tutoring and parent participation.[35]

- Several evaluations of the Los Angeles Team Mentoring, Inc., TeamWorks program have documented positive changes for the high-risk middle school students who have participated in the program over the years. TeamWorks provides groups of ten youth with a team of three mentors who meet with them regularly over the school year. This after-school program uses an activity-based curriculum to facilitate relationship-building, problem-solving, and leadership experiences. Participating students and control groups were surveyed at the beginning and end of the six-month program. The outcomes included improved attitudes toward school, family and community; improved school participation including increased attendance; increased social competency; and improved interpersonal skills.*[36]

- In a rural Vermont junior/senior high school peer mentoring program, students who were regarded as role models were trained to be peer leaders. They worked with adult leaders, teachers, and parents to provide a range of activities, including field trips and a community service project, to 30 younger students. Teachers reported that the mentored students demonstrated positive changes such as increased attendance and attention. Unexpectedly, problem referrals also declined for children who were not participating in the mentoring program. While the author speculates that the positive relationships established as a result of the mentoring program contributed to this effect, there may be alternative explanations that are not related to the peer mentoring program.[37]

- The Collaborative Afterschool Prevention Program employed inner-city high school students as mentor leaders for elementary and middle school children from the same high-risk community. The mentors led structured small group activities to help the students develop social skills, and helped with homework to improve their academic skills. Nearly all of the 46 mentors interviewed reported that the program had been helpful to the participating children by providing a safe place, teaching study habits, and structuring time to do homework. The mentors reported that the mentees' social

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* The TeamWorks program was first evaluated in 1993. The 1994-1995 evaluation surveyed 30 TeamWorks students and a matched control group. The 1996-1997 and 1997-1998 evaluations used a questionnaire with previously published scales to measure the attitudes of 119 and 60 participants, respectively, at two schools at the beginning and end of the program.

skills improved. Perspectives from participating children and teachers are not included in the program description.[38]

Team Mentoring

Some mentoring programs utilize a "team mentoring" approach, in which more than one person works with the same child or youth. According to the P/PV classification study, two to four mentors typically make up a team. In addition to the mentor, the team may include a teacher, parent, or another person from the community.[39] The literature review did not identify any program evaluations of the team mentoring approach.

Computer On-Line Mentoring

Programs that utilize computer-based opportunities to develop relationships through electronic on-line communication are new additions to the mentoring field. For example, the International Telementor Center (ITC) serves children and youth in grades five through college level in public, private and homeschool environments throughout the world. This program helps participants to develop an academic foundation and the skills they need to pursue their unique interests. The ITC matches the employee mentor and funding resources of participating companies with the project needs of students and teachers. Two thousand mentors, 1,650 students, and 140 teachers responded to on-line evaluation surveys. They reported that the program was useful and valuable, and that it had great potential to enhance learning opportunities for students of all ages.*[40]

On a much smaller scale, the Student Teacher Online Mentoring Program (STOMP) encouraged at-risk junior high youth to read by pairing them with university students. The university student mentors were preparing themselves for teaching careers. Mentors and mentees met monthly in person, and corresponded throughout the month via e-mail about books and related projects. According to teachers' reports, the mentees developed significantly more positive attitudes toward reading and increased the number of books they read during the semester-long program.[41]

Peer Mentoring

Peer-to-peer mentoring is another alternative program design. In a Chicago community-based peer mentoring program, older adolescents mentored younger children, ages 7-13, through designing and presenting lessons on violence prevention. An evaluation of the 50 mentored children and a matched control group from the same housing project found that, during the 18-month intervention period, mentored children showed less support for violence and may have avoided an escalation of aggressive behaviors. While the level of aggressive behavior by mentored children did not change, children who did not receive

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* The ITC study used an online survey to obtain qualitative and quantitative data from approximately 2,000 mentors, 1,650 students, and 140 teachers. Results from the 1999/2000 evaluation are not yet available. The evaluator notes that program results have remained consistent since 1997.

mentoring (those in the control group) displayed more aggressive behavior than the mentored children."[42]

The Gang Rescue and Support Project (GRASP) is a peer operated intervention program in Denver, Colorado, that is similar to the 12-Step Alcoholics Anonymous model. This program encourages youth involved in gangs, or under pressure to join, to pursue positive lifestyle changes. Participants attend weekly group meetings and are paired with peer mentors who provide individual counseling and guidance. According to self-evaluations, the 37 mentored youth increased their levels of school involvement and employment, and had lowered rates of gang membership, arrests, and violence-related injuries after participating in the program. Seventy-four percent of the youth reported that GRASP helped them stay out of trouble."[43]

Site-Based Programs

An increasing number of program designs are site-based, meaning that the mentor and child/youth typically meet in a designated place such as a school, hospital, community center or the mentor's workplace. Nearly half of those programs surveyed in the P/PV classification study are site-based.[44] In contrast, community-based programs represent a traditional mentoring model. In these programs, the mentor and child/youth determine where they will meet on the basis of their own needs and goals. They generally meet in different locations depending on the planned activities.

School-based programs are by far the most common, and rapidly expanding, type of site-based mentoring. These programs developed along with the national school reform movement.

Mentoring programs in schools utilize various models to meet different needs. "Lunch-buddy" programs involve adults who meet with a child at least once a week. Vocational mentoring programs focus on training and preparing students for the work world. Peer mentoring programs often seek to integrate new students or to offer academic support from an older student. In addition, tutoring programs that focus primarily on academic goals may encourage a mentoring relationship as a natural outgrowth of the process. On-line telementoring programs match either a class or individual student with a mentor via e-mail or other electronic means.[45]

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* This study used a case-matched cohort design that compared changes in attitude, behavior, and injury rates of the mentored children with a control sample: children from the same housing project that were matched by age and sex. The evaluation used self-report scales for mentees and a behavior checklist for teachers that were administered at the beginning of the study, at mid-point, and at the end of the 18-month intervention.

† The GRASP evaluation used a self-report questionnaire to obtain information on pre-intervention and post-intervention outcome behaviors from 37 youth. Limitations of the study include a small sample size, a limited questionnaire, and an inability to track outcomes on an annual basis.

Another P/PV study reviewed two well-established BBBS school-based programs to learn how such programs operate. The study found that strong relationships can develop within the school context, and concluded that these relationships can make a difference in the lives of youth. Participating youth showed improvements in confidence, grades, social skills, and attendance. These conclusions should be viewed with some caution, however. The researchers noted that these findings were based on observations and interviews with individuals who were extremely supportive of the programs.

This P/PV study also identified some characteristics unique to a school-based mentoring program. First, school-based mentoring programs reach volunteers and youth who tend not to participate in community-based programs. Second, school staff assist in creating strong matches, and then closely supervise those matches. In addition, mentoring in the school context provides volunteers with support and enables them to act as educational advocates for their mentees.[46]

- Children at five BBBS agencies were studied before and after they became involved in school-based mentoring programs in order to identify types of outcomes. Teachers, parents, and mentors reported that the children showed substantial improvements in school performance, self-confidence, attitudes toward school, ability to express their feelings, trust, respect for other cultures, and in relationships with adults and peers. In addition, the children had fewer unexcused absences and fewer repeated grades. These factors can significantly decrease the likelihood of the child dropping out of school. Significant increases in language, science, and social studies scores and in overall grade point average were also reported.[47]

- HOSTS (Helping One Student to Succeed) is a well-established, multi-state school mentoring program that helps low-achieving students improve reading, problem-solving skills, behavior, attitudes, and self-esteem.* This highly structured program operates in 43 states and other locations. Several HOSTS evaluations have found no significant differences between participants and comparison student groups, while others have reported positive findings. HOSTS participants at a Cathedral City, California, school site showed gains in reading relative to the school-wide comparison of their peers.

  The 1996-1997 pre- and post-test evaluation findings from 8,250 HOSTS participants in Texas, Michigan and Delaware found average overall reading gains of one to two grade levels for children in elementary grades, and from one to 1.6 grade levels for

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* HOSTS reports having served over one million students, and involved over 500,000 mentors in 43 states and three countries since 1971. Evaluation data from 1995-98 was collected from the Annual HOSTS National Exemplary School Applications from participating programs in California, Delaware, Michigan, Nebraska, North Carolina, Texas, Washington and Wisconsin. The programs provided quantitative and qualitative data on changes in student performance in reading, and attitudes toward reading and self-esteem. A California school program also used a school-wide comparison. Studies of the other programs did not include a control or comparison group.

middle/high school students. More than half of the students met program completion criteria of reading at or above grade level.

The 1997-98 HOSTS school profile data from seven states (including California) found varying degrees of reading gains for participating students. The evaluation also found a decrease in discipline referrals compared with school-wide rates, improved attendance, improved self-esteem, and improved attitudes toward reading and school in general.[48]

- A study of the Everybody Wins! Power Lunch program in seven Washington, D.C. elementary schools found that it benefited disadvantaged students who read below grade level. In this program, adults shared weekly lunchtime reading sessions with students in several schools. At the end of the school year, teachers reported that the 223 students who were evaluated (20 percent of the program participants) showed the following improvements:

  - 25 percent of poor readers improved their academic performance, more than double the 12 percent of control-group students;

  - 55 percent of the students often or always enjoyed reading, compared to 31 percent in the control-group; and

  - 16 percent of the students improved their classroom behavior, compared to only three percent of control-group students.*[49]

- An evaluation of the California Secondary Schools Basic Skills Demonstration Assistance Program found that both peer tutoring and mentoring activities could positively affect academic achievement (higher test scores, grade point averages and course pass rates) and social integration (increased attendance, decreased disciplinary referrals and improved attitudes toward school). Tutoring was perceived by parents to have had an immediate impact on improved academic performance and social integration. Mentoring activities appeared to have had a broader influence.†[50]

- A recent evaluation compared a mentoring program at one elementary school with a tutoring program at different schools in Massachusetts. Both programs assigned adult volunteers to at-risk students. Based on comparison with a matched control group, the tutoring program, in which different adults interacted with each student, resulted in increased academic achievement. However, the mentoring program, in

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* Everybody Wins! served 1,200 second and third grade students in ten Washington, DC-area schools during the 1998-99 study year. Under the guidance of the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Planning and Evaluation and the American Institutes for Research, the study was conducted in seven schools, with 20 percent of participating elementary school students. It employed a random sample with a control group, and used survey instruments administered at the beginning and end of the school year.

† The evaluation of this one-year federal demonstration program consisted of reviewing and analyzing data collected by 31 grantee school districts, case studies, and student outcomes from 13 grantee projects.

which students met with the same adult, had the most positive results in terms of overall changes. School attitudes, work ethic, motivation, social skills, and work quality improved."[51]

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* This evaluation design included a matched control group and used a set of variables identified by school administrators and teachers as reliable indicators to report status and change. The design was replicated during a second year.

Program and Population Targets

Mentoring programs traditionally target at-risk children and youth. Many programs are designed to target a specific "problem" area, such as alcohol and drug use, gang involvement, and academic failure. One example is a program that paired 20 low-income teen mothers with professionally employed mentors. The program's purpose was to broaden the teen mothers' social networks, and promote their educational and employment advancement. Teen mothers reported that their mentors influenced their educational plans, and envisioned themselves in a job or career-related situation in five years. They reported that they had received assistance with problem solving and decision-making, and had improved their self-esteem and ability to persevere.[52]

The mentoring literature also describes existing or potential programs for specific targeted populations such as gifted youth, gay and lesbian youth, children with serious emotional issues, children with a mentally ill parent, and girls in the juvenile justice system.[53] An example of this targeted approach is the creation of programs that link mentors with children and youth who have been removed from their families and placed in foster care. Many foster children's lives are characterized by lack of permanency and stability. In addition to emotional support, mentors provide a point of continuity for foster children through their constant changes. They also help older foster youth develop the life skills necessary to make a successful transition into adulthood.[54]

Career mentoring programs are targeted to older youth and emphasize achieving both academic and career goals. In addition to offering support, the goal of these mentor programs is to facilitate a youth's completion of high school, admission to college, career exploration, and work experience. One example is the Hospital Youth Mentoring Program (HYMP) that operates in several states. Each hospital-based program matches hospital employees with students in local schools. HYMP is designed to help urban youth to stay in school and prepare for higher education or employment. A P/PV study examined the nature and content of the relationships between mentors and mentees involved in HYMP hospitals; however, it did not examine outcomes for the youth that participated.[55]

Some mentoring programs, such as those using an intergenerational approach, target specific mentors. One such example is the Across Ages Program, a comprehensive, multidimensional program in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, that recruits older adults (age 55+) to mentor at-risk youth attending middle schools. The Across Ages program includes community service, life-skills development, and parent involvement components, along with a mentoring component.

A program evaluation that used random assignment to matched groups and pre- and post-tests, found that participation in the Across Ages program had a significant impact on many of the youth. However, greater effects were seen for those youth who had participated in the program and were assigned mentors. Students with mentors exhibited less substance use, better school attendance, and more positive attitudes toward school,

the future, older adults and community participation. The level of mentoring had an impact on outcomes. In comparison with other mentored youth, those who spent six or more hours per week with their mentors showed significant positive differences on a number of measures (such as absence from school).*[56]

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* The Across Ages evaluation used a matched comparison group strategy. Classes were randomly assigned to one of three groups: a control group (180 students) that received no intervention, a treatment group that participated in a drug prevention program but received no mentoring (90 students), and a treatment group that participated in the same drug prevention program and mentoring (90 students). Outcome and process data was obtained from pre- and post-tests of the three groups from 1991-1998. (This program was originally designed for substance-abuse prevention but has been expanded to address a number of risks.)

Evaluation Limitations and Considerations

There are potential and real limitations that need to be considered when reviewing evaluation findings for mentoring programs.

- Many of the programs rely on observation reports from participants (mentors, mentees, teachers, parents, etc.) to determine their effectiveness. These reports are subjective and subject to the perceptions of individuals. The findings may reflect the bias of reporters who are supportive of the program and its goals.

- The voluntary nature of programs can affect evaluation results. Children and youth who volunteer to participate may already have more assets to build on than those who do not. By self-selecting themselves into the mentoring program, their personal characteristics, in addition to the program, may influence evaluation results.

- Mentor programs that are part of a larger network of comprehensive services are increasingly showing promise. In these programs, it may be difficult to determine the specific impact of the mentoring component in isolation from other components, and from the program as a whole.

- A small sample size or targeted population, common in many of the program evaluations, makes it difficult to generalize evaluation findings to other populations.

- A short timeframe may affect evaluation findings. Most program evaluations study participants' progress during a limited time period, such as 18 months or less. It may be difficult to measure meaningful outcomes in that time.

- Research designs need to be reviewed to ensure that the data used and effects reported are valid and reliable.

Studies in Progress

More studies are currently underway to evaluate mentoring programs. These large impact studies will contribute to our understanding of mentoring effectiveness.

The federal Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention is funding a national evaluation of the Juvenile Mentoring Program (JUMP).* Ninety-three projects in 34 states (nine in California) receive JUMP grants. The JUMP program supports one-to-one mentoring projects for youth at risk of dropping out of school or of involvement in delinquent activities, including gangs and substance abuse. This evaluation is assessing the impact of a mentoring relationship on youth behaviors and attitudes that are related to the long-term JUMP goals: reducing juvenile delinquency and gang participation; improving academic performance; and reducing school drop-out rates. Initial evaluation activities have included documenting project implementation activities and gathering descriptive information. Preliminary findings indicate that youth and mentors view mentoring as a positive experience, and that the mentees have benefited from the experience by avoiding alcohol/drugs and fights, keeping away from gangs, and not using guns or knives.[57]

P/PV continues to investigate school-based mentoring. A recently published P/PV study on "relationship development" explores the differences between school-based and community-based mentoring. The purpose is to determine whether the mentor programs are creating the type of relationships that have been found to have the greatest impact on youth behavior. The next report in this study will examine the program's impact on youth and measure the duration of mentoring effects.[58]

P/PV has also initiated a national demonstration project to test strategies for using churches and other faith-based institutions in local partnerships to address the developmental needs of high-risk youth. The initiative's goals are to decrease involvement with crime and drugs, increase educational achievement, and prepare youth for productive employment. Research is examining the faith-based institutions' ability and capacity to implement youth programs, the role of faith in service delivery, and the extent of community involvement. The first P/PV field report found that faith-based institutions use different approaches and targeting strategies, but share a common commitment to mobilizing adults to mentor youth. This study will also look at program impacts on youth and local communities.[59]

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* Authorized by Congress in 1992, funding for JUMP began in FY 1994-95. The evaluation period has been extended to 2001.

Options

Mentoring Effectiveness

Mentor programs report that mentoring makes an important difference in the lives of children and youth. Mentors, the children and youth they mentor, teachers, and parents agree that these relationships lead to a range of positive results. Recent studies reported in the literature provide additional support that mentoring is an effective approach to build upon youth assets and reduce risk behaviors.

Since the BBBS landmark study, there have been a number of favorable outcome studies that have used social science methodology such as random assignment and matched comparison groups. These studies have primarily been of small programs. Many other program evaluations have reported positive results based on participant reports and observations. Most of these studies have serious limitations. Reliable data about how, why, and where mentoring is successful is still being developed.

Key questions remain. Is mentoring an effective intervention over time? Do the positive outcomes last? What are the essential infrastructure elements (such as program length and intensity) for effective programs? How do program designs impact effectiveness? What are the essential elements that are unique to specific models, and what elements are common across models?

In order to lay a firm foundation for the future expansion and improvement of mentoring programs, better research evaluating the impact of mentoring as an intervention needs to be conducted. Additional and better research and evaluation are also needed to explore long-term outcomes and to further identify program infrastructure criteria for successful outcomes.

Additional large-scale outcome studies are currently underway that will provide more information on mentoring effectiveness and address some of the key questions.

Evaluation Framework

While not necessarily the recommendations of the California Research Bureau or the author, the following options address the need for additional targeted research. First, an effective strategy would be to mandate and adequately fund specific, targeted evaluations that meet scientific standards for determining program outcomes. The findings from these studies would inform current practices and could lead to new and more effective program designs.

Many California state agencies fund and oversee local mentoring activities. These agencies have their own evaluation requirements. The State might benefit from a general evaluation framework that encompasses the full range of mentoring evaluation activities across state agencies. An evaluation framework would help guide the design and funding of state-supported research projects. It would identify potential collaborative

opportunities. The State could build upon its current public/private approach and collaborate with private mentoring organizations to maximize resources when developing and implementing such a framework.

An evaluation framework for mentoring should include the following activities:

- Identify existing evaluation efforts; identify evaluation needs and gaps. Coordinate with existing evaluation efforts.
- Invest funds in well-designed evaluation efforts. These funds should be in addition to, not in place of, program operation funds.
- Identify and implement outcome evaluations of alternative mentoring program designs to determine 1) mentoring effectiveness, 2) the effectiveness of different approaches, and 3) the essential elements of an effective program.
- Fund some longer-term follow-up studies to track outcomes over time. Explore blending research funds and resources across agencies.
- Create a set of indicators and common data definitions for all programs to standardize and facilitate cross-program comparisons. All measurement tools should be consistent with the developmental needs of children and youth.
- Develop realistic and measurable participant and program outcomes that can be used to improve program practices.
- Develop a "learning" strategy to disseminate evaluation findings and implement new program designs based on this information.

Developing and implementing an evaluation framework is consistent with ongoing state collaborative efforts. A specific entity, such as the California Mentor Initiative, could be assigned the lead responsibility and provided with the authority to build upon and use the existing collaborative process to develop, disseminate, and oversee implementation of a framework for a comprehensive research agenda for mentoring.

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Websites

The following websites are useful resources for identifying new research and studies on mentoring effectiveness. This is not an inclusive list of the numerous websites that address mentoring programs, opportunities, and issues. However, links to such additional websites can be found on the sites listed below.

Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America, http://www.bbbsa.org

National Mentoring Center, Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, http://www.nwrel.org/mentoring

The National Mentoring Partnership, http://www.nmp.org

National Youth Development Information Center, http://www.nydic.org

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, http://www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org

Public/Private Ventures, http://www.ppv.org

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